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SUBJECT: BURUNDI HOSTS THE RELAUNCH OF THE ECONOMIC
COMMUNITY OF GREAT LAKES STATES

¶1. (U) Summary: Representatives from the Great Lakes member states of Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo convened in Bujumbura on April 16 to open dialogue for the Economic Community of the Great Lakes States (CEPGL). The CEPGL is relaunched after 13 years of inactivity following the regional ethnic violence begun in ¶1994. Former Burundi parliamentarian, Gabriel Toyi, was chosen as provisional Executive Secretary. Among the major areas of focus for the CEPGL are the consolidation of regional peace and stability, democracy and good governance, energy, and investment. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Delegations from the Great Lakes states of Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo convened in Bujumbura on April 16 and 17 to relaunch the Economic Community of the Great Lakes (CEPGL) organization. The Belgian Foreign Minister, Karel De Gucht, and the European Commissioner of Development and Humanitarian Action, Louis Michel, also attended the opening sessions. The participants agreed that the peace, security and economic development of the Great Lakes region are dependent on the success of various regional integration mechanisms, including the CEPGL. The CEPGL was created in 1976 but is emerging from 13 years of inactivity following the onset of regional violence in ¶1994.

¶3. (U) The primary focus of the member states is to secure the peace and stability of the region through projects targeting democracy, good governance, energy and investments. Minister De Kucht noted that as the region has evolved economically and politically, so too must the CEPGL partnership. He invited the member states to strengthen and increase their cooperation as a means of generating regional peace and stability.

¶4. (U) Minister De Gucht pointed out that the CEPGL cannot be an extension of the group originally conceived in 1976 but rather must evolve to be relevant within the new regional context. The CEPGL member states quickly moved to recognize the sectors needing the most priority and attention in the region and creating a roadmap for the future. Paramount among these priorities is using democracy and good governance to promote peace and stability within the region. Other areas of focus include agriculture and food security, energy, infrastructures and communication, education and research, and investments. Using studies previously completed, the ministers will begin to identify key projects and initiatives to address regional objectives, including a plan to reorganize the Permanent Executive Secretariat of the CEPGL.

¶5. (U) Commisioner Michel indicated that it will be necessary for the CEPGL to work with a new perspective and vision for the future. Michel reminded the participants that the European Community has already pledged 50 million euros, including five million currently available to finance initiatives that will reinforce the logistical, technical and strategic capacities of the CEPGL. He also warned of three risks that will need particular focus to ensure the success of the CEPGL, including the need to realize a sense of urgency, the attention of the international community and the need to turn their backs on old misunderstandings. He expressed confidence in the activities of the CEPGL, recognizing that the partnership has come a long way and its work will determine the destiny of peace and prosperity in the region.

¶6. (U) The participating ministers named Gabriel Toyi as the provisional Executive Secretary of the CEPGL. A CNDD-FDD party member, Toyi is a former Minister of Communal Development and parliamentation from Gitega. Toyi, who succeeds fellow Burundian Salvatore Matata, will remain in this post for four months.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: The relaunch of the CEPGL is a significant step towards bringing lasting political and economic stability to the Great Lakes Region. The longevity of Burundi's post-conflict stability and Congo's recent electoral successes are strong indicators of readiness to address regional cooperation and growth. By putting priorities to ink and recognizing the need for the CEPGL to evolve and reorganize in an effort to meet the changing needs of the area, the member states have demonstrated their commitment to making the Great Lakes region a peaceful, stable, economic force in Africa. End Comment.
MOLLER